

*N7*

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*The Art of Contentment.*

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# S E R M O N

Preached at

S<sup>t</sup>. S W I T H E N ' S Church,  
*October the 27th. 1700.*

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By J O H N P U L L E Y N, A.M.  
Prebendary of St. Paul's.

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A

## SERMON

Preached at

St. SWITHEN'S Church, Octob. 27. 1700.

4. Philipp. 11 v. latter part.

--- For I have learnt in whatsoever State I am,  
therewith to be Content.

THE Philippians were Converted by the Ministry of St. Paul, and that by the Special Direction of the Holy Ghost; as is manifest from the 16th Chapter of the *Acts of the Apostles*, 9th Verse; where St. Paul tells us of a *Vision that He had in the night, when He was at Troas, of a Man of Macedonia, who prayed Him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us.*

There stood *Philippi*, and was a Chief City of that part of the Country, ver. 12. and a Colony of the *Romans*, as appears by the Complaint of the Master of the *Damsel* possess'd with the Spirit of Divination, that was brought against *Paul* and

*Silas*, that *They*, being *Jews*, taught *Customs* which were not lawful for *Them* to observe, being *Romans*, ver. 21.

Here it pleased God to open the Heart of *Lidia*, and many others, to attend to the *Things* that were spoken by his *Servants*, whom He had sent to shew the Way of Salvation, ver. 14. And as in the Gospel the *Devils* confess'd our *Saviour* to be the Son of God, so here *They* proclaim *Paul* and *Silas* to be his *Messengers*, v. 17.

Here also upon the great Earthquake, by which the Prison-doors were opened, and every Man's Bonds loosed, the *Keeper himself* was set at liberty; and after he had washed their Stripes, had his own, which were far more dangerous, heal'd and cleansed by them: For as soon as he had heard the Word of God, *He was baptized, He and all his straitways*, v. 33.

From these small beginnings, and the frequent planting of *St. Paul* afterwards, and the diligent watering of *Epaphroditus*, their Bishop and Apostle, the Number of the Faithful encreased, and the Church was enlarged proportionably to the Fame and Greatness of the City. This Chosen Vessel of God, (who tho' he had committed *Them* to others) had yet the Care of all the Churches upon himself; and particularly this of *Philippi*, to shew

shew how tender an Affection he had towards them ; that *tho' he suffered trouble, as an Evil-doer unto Bonds, yet that the Word of God was not bound.*

[2 Tim. 2. 9.] Notwithstanding the Anger of *Cæsar*, and the Severity of his Officers, He walks abroad by his Letters, and Preaches openly, while He was a Captive. For from his *Prison at Rome*, He sends them this Epistle ; and the Occasion of it was from that liberal supply They had now made to his Necessities , which hearing of his Sufferings They had now sent him by *Epaphroditus*.

Therefore with Expressions very pathetical and mourning , exhorting them to continue in the *Faith and Knowledge of God*, and in all the *Fruits of Righteousness*, especially that of *Love and Unity* among themselves ; and that they should beware of the *Concision* [cap. 3. & 2.] who were always snarling and disputing for the Necessity of *Moses's Law*, and of those Things which were but a shadow of good Things to come ; at length, as very sensible of the kind Remembrance in the Verse before the Text, He tells them of the great Joy he had in the Lord , that now at last their Care of him had flourish'd again : [v. 10.] For it is manifest, that formerly they had been liberal towards him. For he testifies of them at the

[15th Verse] *That in the beginning of the Gospel, when he parted from Macedonia, no Church communicated with him, as concerning Giving and Receiving, save They only, And it is probable, that when St. Paul took Wages from the other Churches, to preach the Gospel truly to those who were in the Regions of Achaia, [as you read in 2 Cor. 11. 8.] He chiefly meant those of Philippi: For it follows at the 9th Verse, That when he was present, and was in want, He was not chargeable to any of them; for that which was lacking to him, the Brethren which came from Macedonia supplied.*

But it seems their Respects towards him in this particular, was not answerable to so fair a beginning; and therefore his Expression is, as if like a Flower in Winter, their Care of him had wither'd; but now at length it began to flourish again, and did send forth an *Odor of a sweet smell, well-pleasing unto God:* [v. 18.]

He who considers how mindful our Apostle was of our Saviour's saying, *It is more blessed to give than to receive:* [20th Acts 35.] And how solemnly He protested to the Elders at Ephesus, *That he coveted no man's Silver, nor Gold, nor Apparel,* [20 Acts 33.] And that writing to the Corinthians, He thought it much better for him to dye, than that any One should make his Glorying void of preaching

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*the Gospel without Charge*: Such a One (I say) may well wonder how our *Apostle* comes to be so well pleas'd with what the *Philippians* had now sent him.

But you are to understand and take notice, that his *Case* with the *Corinthians* was Extraordinary; and that he was oblig'd in Prudence to do what he did, that he might cut off the Boasting of false Apostles, *That wherein they gloried, they might be found, even as He: 2 Corinth. 11. 12.*] And for his *Rejoicing* in the Lord at this time, it was more for their sakes than for his own: For, as St. *Chrysostom* often observes, that Almsdeeds and Works of Charity and Bounty towards those that are in Necessity, are enjoin'd us; not so much for their sakes, who stand in need of them, as for our sakes who do them; because We receive the greatest benefit by them: So the Apostle's great Joy was from the great Desire He had, *That they might have fruit which might abound to their account,* [v. 17.] Therefore that He commended them for what they did; He would have them to understand, that it was not that He did desire a Gift, or speak in respect of Want: *For I have learn'd (saith He) in whatsoever State I am, therewith to be Content.*

In discoursing to these Words, I shall propound these Two Things to your Considerations.

I. The Excellency of this Knowledge, which *St. Paul* here professes he had learnt.

II. I shall consider them as a Lesson for our Imitation, and lay down some Rules and Directions for our Learning of it too.

I. The Excellency of this Knowledge, which *St. Paul* here professes He had learnt.

As the desire of Knowledge, even in the State of Innocency, seems to be the strongest, by that Method which the Devil took to seduce our First Parents; so ever since there hath been nothing more generally sought after, than an improvement of it. It is a thing so highly pleasing in it self, as agreeable to our Natures; and so excellent and honourable, as that it advances us to the Likeness of Angels; according to that of the *Woman of Tekoah* to *David*, [2 Sam. 14.] *My Lord the King is as an Angel of God, to know the Things which are upon the Earth.*

Now the Knowledge which we have is Two-fold: First, That which is Natural; by which we are made better than the Beasts. Secondly, That which is Acquired; by which we excel those which

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are of the same Rank with us. The first, as it is scant and narrow, so it is of little repute ; but that which is superadded to it by our Labour and Industry, is thought to encrease our Worth, according to the several degrees of it. And therefore St. Paul hath observed, that it commonly puffs up, unless it be mixed with Charity, and such Principles of Wisdom as teach us by whose Bounty one Man is made to differ from another.

Now there is a great Variety of Knowledge, and all is not alike Excellent, but is more or less to be esteemed, according to the Worth and Dignity of that which is the Object of it, or rather according to the Use and End to which it tends. For He that studies the Nature of *Herbs* and *Drugs* in order to Medicine, and the Cure of Diseases, is to be preferr'd to such a One, who out of Speculation only attends the Motions of the *Stars*. As there are foolish and trifling Arts, which are no ways useful, and give no supply to the Necessity of our Lives ; so there is a kind of Knowledge, that scarcely deserves that Name ; which administers to Strife and Contention, and doating about perverse Questions and Disputations.

[*1 Tim. 6. 3, 4, 5.*] Such as fill the Head with unprofitable Notions, but yet have little or no

influence at all upon the Will and Affections: Which tho' they may make a man the more learned, yet they can never make him better. Whereas *true Knowledge*, is that by which we understand our selves, which affords some Cure to our distemper'd Passions, and directs us how to set in order the *Whole Man*: As it is said of *Socrates*, that he was pronounced the *Wiseſt upon Earth* by the *Heathen Oracle*; not for that modest Expression of his, *That he knew this only, that he knew nothing*; but for what *Seneca* reports of *Him*, that *He was the first* [*Qui totam Philosophiam revocavit ad mores,*] who persuaded Men to leave their *captious Sophistry*, and their curious Searches into the *Ways of Nature*, and the *Motions of the Heavens*; and rather to consider of their own, to turn their Eyes inward upon themselves, and to make it their chief business, not so much to be *knowing*, as to be *happy*, or, if you please, to be *content*. For tho' the Sound be different, yet the Thing is the same; and the meaning of *Both* is but *Quies in Bono*, the *Peace and Quiet of the Mind* throughout all the *Changes and Chances* of this *Mortal Life*.

This is that which the *Wise men* in all Ages have generally sought after; and none are thought to come so near the Attainment of it, as the *Stoicks*,  
whole

whose *Principles*, as St. *Hierom* hath observed, are of all others the most agreeable to the *Christian Philosophy*. Many famous Persons they had of that *Seet* amongst them, who from that *Opinion*, That nothing was Evil, but what was dishonest, are reported to have been so unconcern'd for whatsoever should happen to them from without, that They profess'd themselves to be the same Men in *Phalaris* his *Bull*, as they would be upon a *Bed of Roses*; i. e. as even and undisturb'd in their Minds under the greatest *Tortures*, as if They were taking their Ease and Pleasure. But this St. *Hierom* would not believe, neither need you; unless you please; they being observed to affect what is lofty in Sound; which tho' to some Admirers of Them, it may bespeak the Greatness of Their Minds, yet it is still without that due regard which ought to be had for the Frailties of the Flesh.

Tho' indeed it cannot be denied *Them*, but that They have deserved well in this kind; I mean, in Their pursuits after Peace and Contentment of Mind. Tho' there never was so compleat a *Master* of it, as the *Scholar* in the *Text*, who leading us to the several *Degrees of Perfection*, yet allows us to be Men, and of Natural Affections, so as upon a Good account to grieve and mourn, and

to rejoice, and fear, and hope, and yet in all to be *Content*.

This Mystery, St. *Paul* tells us, He learnt ; and if we Consider the Particulars whence it arises, viz. the *Vanity* of all things here below, and the *Hope* of what hereafter we shall enjoy ; We may understand, that *He* partly learnt it at the Feet of *Gamaliel*, partly in his Rapture into the Third Heaven, where he saw what He was not able to utter. Natural Light, and that Knowledge which we derive from Common Experience, may give us some assistance ; but we are not likely to be *Proficients* indeed, without the Excellent Knowledge of our Lord *Jesus Christ*, [3. *Philip.* 8.] and the Understanding, which we have by the Revelation of the Spirit. Little is to be done without both the *Wisdom* and *Grace* which is from above ; by which alone We clearly know what we ought to do, and are sufficiently enabled to perform it.

These are the Helps and Advantages which St. *Paul* had, and which every *Christian* hath now in common with Him. And therefore a great *Shame* it is, as well as a great *Unhappiness*, That tho' we come not to the Pitch of this Worthy of the First Rank, We should not make some tolerable Progress towards the Attainment of so Comfortable

fortable a Condition ; in the Quietness whereof,  
We are in a Preparation to the Rest Eternal.

### II. St. Paul learnt it, and so must We.

It is a business that requires Discipline and Exercise. We must first be taught, and then be careful to reduce what We know to practice. It is a Lesson hard to take out, and requires much Labour and Watchfulness ; as to keep the Body under, so to keep the Mind in Order, that like a Cube, it may be firm and settled, which way soever it falls, in all Places, and in all Conditions ; and to be Content in all, and to know where to fix in the great Variety of those Outward Things that may happen to us.

*The Heart of a Fool, saith Ecclesiasticus, is like a Cart-wheel, and his Thoughts like a rowling Axe-tree.* Such indeed we are all naturally ; fickle and unstable, desirous of Change, and in a dislike of what We have, and longing after what We have not : Which arises from the disproportion of whatsoever this World affords, to the desires of the Soul, and the folly of thinking they may be satisfied with such Enjoyments. For from the fair Promises which They make, the Desires swell and enlarge themselves, and consequently the Mind grows eager in the pursuit of them, till by Experience we find

find that *all is Vanity and Vexation of Spirit*: But They that are the True Disciples of their *Lord and Master*, (in whcm are hid all the Treasures of Wisdom and Knowledge, and who hath proclaimed Ease and Rest to all his Followers,) They are better instructed in the Ways and Methods of procuring the great Blessing of the Text, and shall not fail of *Contentation*, if they believe what He hath promised them, and do what He hath taught them. If they follow the Steps of the Apostle here, *who was crucified to the World, and the World to Him*; *i. e.* as St. *Bernard* saith; to whom the Things which the World so much admires, were a Cross; as, Carnal Delights and Pleasures, Honour and Riches, and Vain Applause, and the like; and who was fix'd to what the World reputed a Cross, and embraced it with all his Heart. But this is to be a great *Proficient indeed*, and we are first to be *Learners*.

We are generally desirous to be taught by Example, rather than by Precept; because the Way is shorter, saith *Seneca*, and because Men had rather believe their Eyes than their Ears; and by them surely the Impression is the deeper: and therefore they say of *Plato*, That He learnt more from the Conversation of his *Master Socrates*, than he did by his Lectures.

Now

Now the *Pattern*, which we have before us, is so very Excellent, that if ever *Any* was apt to inflame to an Imitation, certainly this much more; the *Course* and *Progres* of it is so Comfortable, and the *End* so Happy. Yet for as much as *Examples*, tho' never so Eminent, at so great a distance of Time, lose much of their Efficacy which They had in their *Proper Age*; Nay, tho' they were present to our View, would not alone be so clearly understood, and so perfectly instruct in this Case, as when we have also a Knowledge of the *Rule*: Besides our looking upon so glorious a *Leader*, it will be necessary, that we have certain short Lessons at hand, which may be as continual helps, apt to moderate our Desires, and work our Minds fit for the Inhabitation of Peace.

That whatsoever our outward Condition may be, the inward Man may be at Rest, and secure from those Storms which usually attend undisciplin'd and unwary *Souls*. That which commonly disquiets us, is the ~~Uneasiness~~ of our Present State, in reference to some particulars; which if They were once removed from *Us*, or We from *Them*, We fancy there would certainly follow a Present Calm.

1. In the first place therefore, in order to our Contentment, in what we *are* or *have*; we are to  
• consider,

consider, that there is no Condition of Life, but in it self is in some degree or other *Vexations*. It hath some Wants and Cares, some Troubles and Anxieties that attend it. It is Essential to our Nature to be expos'd to Miseries and Disturbances from without. *Man is born* [saith Holy Job, cap. 5. 7.v.] *to trouble, as the spark flies upward*; i. e. by a natural and unavoidable Necessity: and St. Paul tells us [in 1 Cor. 10.13.] that there is no Temptation or Trouble that befals us, but what is *common* or *incident* to Man. As we came into, so we still live in a troublesome and tumultuous World; which is the proper place of Grief and Fears; the Center of Cares and Diseases. Where we are surrounded with the Inconveniences of our Younger, and the InfirmitieS of our Elder Years; which, as *Seneca* very well resembles it, are in a long Life like Dust, and Dirt, and Rain in a long Journey. And therefore it would be an unpardonable Folly for any Man to think wholly to avoid them, but that some time or another he must have his share in them.

And therefore there being a *Necessity* of enduring, it is wisdom rather with Patience to undergo the Burthen we are acquainted with, than by Murmuring and Impatience, either to make it more weighty, or change it for *another*, which, for ought we know, may be far more grievous and troublesome.

God

God in his infinite Wisdom hath tempered our Lives, and made a mixture in all of Grief and Joy, of Sweet and Bitter, that the Allay which we find to our Comforts here, might stir us up to seek after those which are more perfect and satisfying. As the *Israelites*, who in their *Canaan* had some Remains of the People of the *Land* amongst them, that they might be as so many *Thorns* in their Sides to mind them of a better *Country*.

He that dreams of *Milk* and *Honey*, and listens only after *Ease* and *Delicacy*, hath forgotten sure, that Man was turned out of Paradise, and that he lives upon the *Earth*, which in every Corner of it is curs'd with *Bryars*; and of which *Kings* and *Emperors* have their share, as well as their meaner Subjects; and *Good Men*, as well as *Bad*. So that our Care should not be to be free from what all partake of, but to behave our selves with that Caution and Prudence, that we be not rent or wounded by them. By Struggling and Impatience we are the more intangled; and the frequent stirring of our *Yoke* will but gall our Necks the more. He comes off the clearest, who with Meekness bears the *Calamities* of *this Life*, which the Almighty hath made necessary for us in order to a *Better*.

2. As we create our Trouble by Disappointments, and the Delusion of our own Hopes, whilst we seek after a greater Degree of Happiness than

this World affords ; so likewise, in the next place, we occasion our own Trouble and Disquiet, by aggravating the *Misery* of our present Condition, beyond the due *Circumstances* of it.

For we are apt to imagine no man's Sufferings are so great as our own ; and yet, for the most part, to an impartial Eye, they would appear far more light and easy, than what many others endure. And although we are much given to magnify the Happiness of those whose Course of Life is most different from *That* which we are in ; yet upon a more exact View, if it comes to a *Vos Hinc*, and a *Hinc Vos*, that so we might be what we so much admire, we should chuse rather to stand our ground, and keep us as we were. As it hapned in the *Apologue*, when upon a general Complaint, every Man was enjoin'd to bring his *Cross* into the *Market-place*, that so there might be an Exchange made more to every man's Content ; They, who before thought themselves the most *miserable* People in the World, *greedily* snatch'd up their own again, as being affrighted at their Neighbours burthens.

And indeed, what have we comparable to the Afflictions, which many others groan under ? Their Pains and Sicknesses, their Povertyes and Oppressions, the Calamities of their Persons and Families. But as some Men complain out of too great a Fulness and Variety, so for the most part we complain

out of Wantonness. The greatness of our Felicity hath made us *delicate*; and what was Light of it self, is thought grievous to be born, only because we are not accustomed to endure. Whereas we should help our selves with this *Consideration*, That seeing the Condition of our Lives is such, that there is a necessity of bearing some Cross or Burthen; We of all others have the most reason to yield, not only a cheerful, but a thankful Submission, who have the *least* to undergo.

1. But if our *Sufferings* should be of the *first Magnitude*, then there is this to be considered, that *They* may be sent as *Punishments* for our *Sins*; and so are to be born with *Contentation*, as *They* are less than our *Iniquities* deserve. For then sure we are not to quarrel with our *Rod*, when tho' the *Strokes* be sharp, they are not answerable to our *Demerit*. As *Shimei* had no *Cause* to complain of his *Confinement* to a *City*, when he had *deserv'd* a *Halter*, or something *worse*, for *Cursing* the Lord's *Anointed*; nor our *First Parents*, that God had *stripp'd* them of that *Glory*, wherewith they were encircled during their *Innocency*, and *cloath'd* them with a *Penitential Garment*, to put them to *Shame*, and to mind them of their *Mortality*. The *Courtest Vesture* was a great *Kindness*, seeing they had made themselves naked by a *Contempt* of his *Laws*.

2. But then in the *Second place*. What we en-

dure may be intended for *Discipline* only; and then it will become us to say with *Old Eli*, *It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good.* [1 Sam. 3.18.] He knows what is best for us, and therefore let us not be troubled if He brings us to Happiness by such ways and means as are contrary to those which we fancy more proper for that End. He brings *Light* out of *Darkness*, and makes the most *unlikely* Things prove advantagious to the Accomplishment of his own Purposes. And of this we find a remarkable Instance in this Epistle, and in the Person of St. Paul.

“ That Chosen Vessel of God, so rarely endued  
“ with Abilities of all sorts to make his *Preaching*  
“ effectual. That *Tonitru Gentium* (as *Tertullian*  
“ styles him) who whilst he reasoned of the *Myste-*  
“ *ries of Faith*, could make the stoutest Heart to  
“ tremble. He who had so many *Tongues*, and so  
“ much *Zeal* to employ them all, and *Power* to  
“ confirm what he taught by *Miracle*; when such  
“ a One as He was in Prison, who would not have  
“ thought that Christianity would have stood at  
“ a stay, and the *Gospel* have been in Fetters with  
“ him? And yet the *Effect* and *Issue* of this was  
quite otherwise, as you may see in the 1st Chapter  
of this Epistle, 12 v. and so forward. For by the  
Over-ruling Power and Providence of God, that  
which hapned out to him, *did fall out rather to the*  
*furtherance, than the hindrance of the Gospel,* and  
his

his Bonds in Christ were famous in the Palace, and in all other Places.

Let us then without Murmuring follow which way soever God shall lead us, how strait and rugged soever the Path be ; tho' it prove exceeding unpleasant to the Sense, and cross to our own Wisdom. For He is able to make all Things work for our Advantage, and to make them not only successful in the End, but comfortable in the Way too. So that we shall clearly perceive, that if we be in Trouble, it is good for us to be so.

3ly. There is nothing more ordinary with us than to be vex'd and discontented about that which often-times proves most beneficial and advantagious to us. As *Moses* was very much perplex'd, when he was Commanded to return into *Egypt* ; yet it was the first Step to his Grandeur, his Entrance upon that glorious Conduct, wherein He was so highly favour'd of God, and so renown'd over all the World.

So *Sickness* is look'd upon as a very sore Affliction, and none accounted generally so unhappy as those that lie under it, and yet by that we are commonly brought to consider of our Ways, are taken off the Temptations of the World, and have all our Passions and Carnal Affections subdued and mortified, and are made gentle and meek, humble and patient, and prepared for a happy passage to a better Life.

And as we are mistaken in our Notion of what is

is *Evil*, so we are in our Notion of what is *Good*: For that which we eagerly desire as our chiefest *Happiness*, as the case many times stands with us, is the only cause of our *Misery*: For we think there is nothing better for us, than that all things should sort with our *Minds* and *Wills*; and yet from thence we grow proud and secure, and forgetful of God, and of his *Goodness*. Our *Thoughts* are so wholly engross'd in the contemplation of our own *Happiness*, that we have little *lift* or *leisure* to reflect upward to the hand that gave it: Whence it is, that *Solomon* hath observed in *Prov. i. v. 33.* *That the prosperity of Fools destroy them; but who so hearkeneth unto me; i. e. to the voice of Wisdom,* and shall give himself up wholly to the guidance of it; *Shall dwell safely and be quiet from fear of Evil.* He shall be free from that which is truly *Evil*, much more from that which is *fantastical only*. Of which I shall speak somewhat in the

4th. Place, and desire you to take notice, that our greatest *Vexations* are commonly from such *Evils* as are *imaginary only*. We cannot be at quiet for the want of such *Riches*, such *Honours* and *Pleasures* as are enjoyed by others. We have not those *Accommodations*, and the other *Advantages* of *Privacy*, and *Society in City, Court, and Country*; as if *Happiness* consisted in these, and not rather in a *Mind* blessed with an *Indifferency* either to want, or to enjoy them. The *City* is *proud*

proud and luxurious ; the *Country* rude and simple. St. *Peter* by thrusting of himself into *Company*, forswore his *Master*. And on the other side, our *Saviour* was never so much tempted, as when he was *alone* in the *Wilderness* : And yet *Holy David* was devout in the *Confluence* of the *Court*, as well as the *Baptist* in the *Wilderness* ; St. *Hierom* in his *Village* of *Bethlehem* ; and St. *Gregory* at *Rome*. So that *Contentment* is not fix'd to these *Things*, but they are good or bad, according to the *Wisdom* or *Folly* of those who have to do with them.

And as for *Pleasures*, they are never allowable for themselves, but as they are taken for some *Honest End* ; and for the most part they do corrupt the *Thoughts*, enervate the *Mind*, and sensualize the *Reason* of the *Man* ; and let us do what we can, we shall always have too much of them. To quarrel that we have no more, is to be angry that our *Enemy* is too weak. Happy is he, that for the *Love* of *Virtue* can deny himself the *Tast* of them here, in assurance he shall have his *Fill* of them with more *Innocency* hereafter.

And for *Great Places* and *Authority*, they that have them are pinch'd as well as their *Neighbours* : and there are many, who tho' they are *Great*, are not *Great enough*. For besides, that the *Soul* swells with *Preferment* and beyond it, there will always be more *Friends* and *Dependants* than can be gratified, and more *Enemies* than can be wholly subdued.

Nay

Nay further, in the *Administrations of Justice*, Men that are of honest and upright Intentions, are not a little troubled, when upon Experience they find the World so far corrupted and debauch'd, so far beyond the Cure either of those *Laws*, or of that little *Religion* that is left in it, that they cannot do the *Good* they *would*, even whilst they seek the *Publick Interest* more than their own. Something there is in it sure, that our *Saviour came into the World not to be ministred unto, but to minister.* [Matt. 20. 28.] And it is the wholsome Advice of the Apostle St. *James*, *That we be not many Masters.* But especially that of our blessed Apostle St. *Paul* is observable, which he writes to the *Corinthians*. [1 Ep. 7. 21.] (if St. *Chrysostom's Gloss* be allow'd upon the place) *Art thou called being a servant?* Care not for it; let not your Condition trouble you; for it is no hindrance to your being a Good Christian, or a Happy Man. But, and if thou mayest be *free*, chuse (saith he) rather to be a Servant. So that it seems the *Low Estate* is not only more easy and secure, but the more Blessed too, as being the least encumbred, and the most like to the Great *Patron* of Perfection, and the nearest Dispositon to *Peace* and *Contentation*.

5th. and Lastly. (For I shall instance in no more Particulars) That which most generally doth disquiet Men of all Ages and Conditions, and Places, is the *inordinate Desire of more Riches*. No body think they have

have *Enough*, because they set no Bounds to their *Gettings*; or if they do limit themselves therein, they are so extravagantly Wanton, that they are next to *nothing*.

Were I once assured of a *Competency* (saith *Lucilius*) I would then apply my self to *Philosophy*, or the Study of *Wisdom*. I remember *Seneca's Answer* in his Letter to him, is, That he thought he began at the wrong End, because he thought, without the help of *Philosophy*, it would be a hard matter to know what was sufficient. For if we once lay aside our *Reason*, and consult only with our *Appetites*, as they have no Measure, so our Cravings and Longings can have no mean End. But if we seriously ask our selves this *Question*, To what End *Riches* are desir'd? there can no other Answer in reason be return'd than this, To serve our *Necessities*. And this the *Great Proficient* in the *Mystery* of the *Text* hath reduced to a very small Number, *Meat for the Belly*, and *Cloathing for the Back*; [1 Tim. 6.8.] Having therefore *Food* and *Rayment*, let us be therewithal *Content*. So that a very little Portion will serve the Turn if our Desires be but sober and regular; and we shall easily see what little need there is of Carking and Solitude for what is allow'd by the Providence of the Almighty Being to the Fowls of the Air, and the Lillies of the Field. *Ad supervacua sudatur*. All our Pains and Toil, and Disquiet, is for that which is superfluous, and may very well be spared. And from hence arise the Cares of this Life, which our Blessed Saviour compares to Thorns, [8. Luk. 14.] and the foolish and hurtful *Lusts* of those

that resolve to be rich, who pierce themselves through with many sorrows, 1 Tim. 6. 9, 10. Against which the most powerful Remedy that can be prescribed, is, the reducing of our Minds into Order, and the confining of our Appetites to such Necessities as are real and rational. For as long as they be let loose without restraint, the *Man* must needs be ill at ease for every thing he hath a mind to; like *Ahab*, who tho' he had a whole Kingdom to walk in, could neither eat, nor drink, nor sleep till he had *Naboth's Vineyard*. In such a case, if he had all this whole World, with *Alexander*, he would weep to hear of another that was out of his reach.

It will be much less troublesome to fit our Minds to our present Condition; for by so doing, we shall keep our Happiness within our own power; we shall make short work, and rid our selves of a thousand Lusts and Cares, of Designs and Fears, and Disappointments; and besides, really obtain what all those *Fine Things* we seek for do but fairly promise. For a Man's Life (saith our Lord and Master) doth not consist in the abundance of the Things he possesses, 12. Luke 15. i. e. Our comfortable being here is not to be accounted from our having much, but from our not wanting. For that argues such a Fulness and Satisfaction as the *Philosopher* had, who going through the *Market-place*, admir'd at the great number of things he had no need of.

They are our Necessities indeed which make us poor, and if by the extravagancies of our Desires

They be made numerous beyond the measure of our fortunes, though we may have great *Possessions*, yet we can have no great *Contentment*; because the Mind from thence will always be longing after that which we can never enjoy. But if we put a stop to our Passions in the beginning of their Course, before they be in their full career, and grow too hard for us, if we strike at the very Root, and mortify all our Wanton appetites, our Care then will be only for those things which every where occur; and so *Peace* and *Contentment* will wait upon us in every Corner.

To Conclude therefore,

Much of this Kind may be said by a meer *Heathen*, to take us off of the inordinate pursuit of those things that disturb our *Peace*, and the Content which every one might have in the Estate he is in. But then as *Christians* we have a higher Obligation to contempt of all things here below, from the *Assurance* we have of much better things reserved for us in the *Heavens*. For they whose Hopes, and Joys, and Desires are in and after them, will not be very solicitous for any Abundance beyond the Necessities of this Life. They make for the *City which hath a Foundation*, *wherein they may rest*. They mind not Earthly things, nor with the *Serpent* lick the *Dust*. But their Conversation is in *Heaven*, and they chiefly mind the Things that will lead them thither. They are *Strangers* and *Wanders* here below, not upon *Pleasure*, but upon *Sinnes*, and such business as takes up all their *Thoughts* and

and Cares ; so that they are not Curious of their Entertainment or Accommodations in the Way, provided they be not hindred in their Journey ; *making with the Might they have towards the Mark*, the glorious Purpose of their High-Calling, which is in Christ Jesus. They care for no Honours but what come from God, nor any Pleasures but what are at his Right-hand ; nor any Riches, unless it be in Faith, and in God's Works, which are such as St. Chrysostom hath deserved, will go along with us into the next World : but all of the other sort, which is scattered up together here, that must be left behind, and therefore not worth looking after, saith St. Paul, those who are providing for Eternity. *For we bring nothing into this World, and it is certain we can carry nothing out of it: having therefore Food and Raiment, let us therewithal content.* [1 Tim. 6.7.] Lazarus had more, and yet we account him a happy Man, because his End was so. Tho' his Outward Condition was most despicable in the Eye of the World, yet his Mind being rightly fix'd, he possess'd his Soul in Patience, Meekness, and Humility, and such other Graces as are able to such an Estate ; and when he died, He recommended it to God, and it was carried by Angels to Abraham's Bosom. To which place of infinite Rest and Contentment, God in his great Mercy bring us All, thro' the Merits and Mediation of his Blessed Son our Saviour, whom with the Father, and the Holy Ghost, be all Honour, Glory, Power, Might, Majesty, and Dominion Ever and Ever. Amen.